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# History: 13

Sharon Olds

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## History: 13 · Sharon Olds

When I found my father that night, the blood  
smeared on his head and face, I did not  
know who had done it. I had loved his body  
whole, his head, his face, untouched,  
and now he floated on the couch, his arms  
up, like Mussolini hanging  
upside down in the air, his head  
dangling where they could reach him with boards and their  
fingernails, those who had lived  
under his tyranny.

I saw how the inside of the body could be  
brought to the surface, to cover the skin,  
his heart standing on his face, the weight of his  
body pressing down on his head,  
his life slung in the bag of his scalp,  
and who had done it? Had I, had my mother,  
my brother, my sister, we who had been silent  
under him, under him for years? He lay in his  
gore all night, as the body hung all  
day outside the gas station in  
Milan, and when they helped him up and  
washed him and he left, I did not see it —  
I was not there for the ashes, I had been there  
only for the fire, I had seen my father  
strung and mottled, mauled as if taken and  
raked by a crowd, and I of the crowd  
over his body, and how could anything be  
good after that, how could anything be good  
in such a world, I turned my back  
on happiness, at 13 I entered  
a life of mourning, of mourning for the Fascist.